

improving marksmanship

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Combat arms leaders all agree on the importance of accurate fire. Nevertheless, our Army has not been successful in training the infantrymen in tactical units to high marksmanship standards. If producing infantrymen who are deadly shots is an important goal, then we must analyze our shortcomings systematically; the widespread nature of the problem indicates that small unit leaders are not being provided with the resources necessary for them to succeed.

We recognize the role of master fitness trainers in improving our physical fitness training; we also recognize the need for master gunners in armor units. Marksmanship should receive equal consideration. Each rifle company should have a designated master rifleman and an assistant master rifleman. The company master rifleman's duties

would be to advise his commander on the unit's basic, advanced, and combat marksmanship programs and to serve as the quality control for company "train-the-trainer" instruction. The conventional approach of using a few outside experts to train a large number of noncommissioned officers in a short period of time is not cost effective and simply doesn't work.

The Infantry School should develop a master rifleman program of instruction, taught by the Army Marksmanship Training Unit either at Fort Benning or in the field using mobile training teams. The course should concentrate on both rifles and machineguns.

If the master rifleman concept does make sense, fiscal constraints should not be a limiting factor. Priorities must

INFANTRY COMPANY TWO-DAY M16A2 PMT	
SUBJECT	TRAINING AIDS
o Marksmanship fundamentals	o Charts: integrated act of firing, sight alignment, breath control o Shadow box o Belgian prism o Dime (for dime and washer drills)
o Zeroing (sight manipulation/shot group analysis)	o Charts: M16A2 rear and front sights, mechanical zero, shot group analysis
o Weaponeer zero and fire/MACS (multipurpose arcade combat simulator) zero and firing/training film	o Weaponeer o MACS computer o Television tapes 7-1 and 7-2 (teaching basic rifle marksmanship, Parts I and II)
o Effects of wind and gravity/adjusted aiming point	o Charts: FM 23-9, Appendix F, Figures 5, 7, 8, 9, and 12
NOTES: 1. Each subject is taught by squad leaders with one-half of day allotted for each. The company progresses through the training by platoon/company headquarters. 2. Weaponeer and MACS training will generally require more than the allotted time.	

FIGURE 3

field, or record firing — must be given remedial training on site using such devices as the weaponeer and the shadow box. Too frequently, units continue having a soldier fire until he obtains a zero by chance, or qualifies on paper only. Causes, not symptoms, must be treated.

Most important to the success of a range program, however, is a unit's ability to put its squad leaders in positions where they can coach their own soldiers. The proposed two-week program requires squad leaders to be present whenever their soldiers qualify with their assigned M16A2s, M9s, M203s, M249s, and M60s. Although consolidated ranges are efficient on paper, if first-line supervisors are not present during weapon qualification, haste and waste is almost always the order of the day.

Infantry battalions must also emphasize combat marksmanship as part of their overall training program. Combat marksmanship training includes fire and movement, control and distribution of unit fire, firing under stress, and firing in various weather and light conditions.

The starting point in developing a combat marksmanship program is the realization that small unit live fire exercises will never be conducted as frequently as the commander desires because of resource constraints. At the same time, when live fires are conducted, more Class V (at least 5.56mm) will often be available than is needed to accomplish the basic training objective — a squad reaction to contact, for example. Generally, units focus on one task or battle drill, complete it, and then fire all their remaining ammunition in a "mad minute" against an invisible counterattack.

Commanders must make the most of the opportunities each live fire exercise presents. A squad reaction to contact drill, for example, may consist of an assault during which collective combat marksmanship skills are evaluated by a scoring system that does the following:

- Determines the amount of time the targets were exposed before being taken under effective fire.
- Grades marksmanship (using balloons, fixed target silhouettes inside bunkers, and the like).
- Rewards a unit by giving it credit for any ammunition it has not expended.

Then, instead of having a unit squander its remaining ammunition in fighting off an obligatory counterattack, the squad may force-march to a new position where it fires 20 rounds per man at the 25-meter Alternate Course C on individual lanes. This will give valuable feedback to the chain of command and, perhaps more important, to the individual soldier on the effect of fatigue on marksmanship. Two major training objectives can therefore be accomplished through one live fire exercise.

(As a side note, the major disadvantage of a squad forced-march collective live fire exercise today is that no information is provided on how the individual soldier shoots while under stress, and no meaningful corrective training occurs after the exercises. This does not make sense. We must try to evaluate an individual's combat marksmanship skills just as religiously as we test him during semiannual qualifications.)

Additionally, we must stress to our subordinates that MILES is the best combat marksmanship training device available and that they should use it whenever possible. Even



so, if the chain of command does not emphasize marksmanship skills during MILES force-on-force exercises (by stressing boresighting, for example), much of the training benefit that can accrue from using that device will be lost.

An infantry battalion must be imaginative in its approach to marksmanship training and try to gain every possible advantage from every live fire opportunity. For example, some units always set up 25-meter improvised lanes and rezero their small arms before a live fire exercise. Through rezeroing, all soldiers have an opportunity to adjust for changes to their sight pictures. (This is especially important for the younger soldiers.) Rezeroing also reinforces the importance of well-aimed shots before a unit crosses the line of departure.

A second example of making every round count pertains to live fire exercises during which the soldiers wear protective masks. Units often comply literally with the guidance found in Field Manual 23-9 and conduct 20-round firing exercises in MOPP (mission oriented protective posture) from the prone unsupported and individual fighting positions at 25-meter targets. But the soldiers never gain any precise feedback on their accuracy until they have expended all of their ammunition. This kind of firing initially should be at a zero target to provide a soldier with accurate information on how he must adjust his aim to hit the target at center of mass. Only then should he be permitted to fire to achieve the standard of 11 target hits out of 20 exposures.

A third example concerns opportunity firing on live fire exercise ranges. Units should consider conducting MOPP or night firing, or both, whenever a windfall of ammunition appears at the end of an exercise. Opportunity firing strengthens critical marksmanship skills and can also eliminate the need to concentrate on anything except the basics during range time.

Finally, infantry battalions should fire as frequently as

possible. A battalion that is not otherwise conducting range programs or live fire exercises should always schedule at least a 25-meter range and forecast a limited amount of ammunition each month. This range can be used to have newly assigned or reassigned soldiers zero or rezero their weapons, to conduct combat marksmanship training after forced marches, and to carry out both MOPP and limited 25-meter feedback firing exercises. To increase the frequency and quality of our marksmanship training, we should reduce, if necessary, the amount of ammunition fired during collective live fire exercises.

Infantry battalions can improve the quality of their marksmanship programs if they give those programs the proper emphasis. The training strategy outlined here advocates the following:

- Establishing a master rifleman program.
- Creating small arms range times and designating these as prime time training.
- Increasing our emphasis on combat marksmanship training.
- Adopting a "make every round count" approach to all live fire opportunities.
- Firing more often using fewer bullets.

Regardless of the specific marksmanship training strategy an infantry unit adopts, however, it must be based upon this principle: Commanders must not only emphasize marksmanship in words, they must also set up their subordinates for success (down to the squad level) by giving them the necessary training resources and guidance.

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